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BEYOND TRAUMATIC NEUROSIS[1]

A Psychoanalytic Study of Late Reactions to the Concentration Camp Trauma

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If one consults the Greek dictionary in reference to the word " trauma " one will find the following meanings: a wound, a hurt, a damage, and in an implied sense, a heavy blow, a defeat. The last of these meanings contains also the implication of making a decision, namely between acceptance or non-acceptance of defeat. In this way the ancient Greeks had anticipated Kardiner who wrote (1941) that after the pathogenic trauma

> follows a continual and often fruitless struggle to recapture the tools of mastery that have been lost, and in serious cases a final acceptance of defeat.

A psychological trauma can be defined as an onslaught of stimuli upon the ego, which overwhelm the ego either because of their massiveness or because the ego is too immature to cope with this kind of stimuli. In other words, an adult ego can without regression be just as weak as an immature ego if the impact of stimuli is too excessive relative to the stimulus barrier. The resulting breach in the stimulus barrier induces a struggle for undoing or restitution—*Wiedergutmachung*—especially if the damage was not caused by a simple accident and a lack of caution of the individual himself but by a pathological society. Therefore, the war neuroses are based on a conflict between the patriotic acceptance of the trauma as a sacrifice in the service of the fatherland and the non-acceptance and opposition against the symbolic metaphor of the *Landesvater* (father of the country) or uncle and the parental role assumption of a recidivist war society. This essay, however, will deal with reactions to traumata for which even this conflict is non-existent because the pathological society or agency responsible for the traumata made no secret of the fact that the infliction of these traumata was intended as an intrinsic part of its political programme and that a patriotic acceptance was not only not expected but rejected.

The topic of traumatic neurosis was introduced by the discussion on the psychoanalysis of the war neuroses at the 5th International Psycho-Analytical Congress in Budapest in 1918, and has again moved into the foreground during and after World War II. When Freud turned a cold shoulder to the observers of the traumatic neuroses of World War I who had

> announced triumphantly that proof was now given that an endangering of the instinct of self-preservation can produce a neurosis without participation of sexuality

and when he emphasized his assumptions even more strongly (1926), it seems that unintentionally he had turned traumatic neurosis into an embarrassing topic. Traumatic neuroses are mentioned in the psychoanalytic literature especially after World War II almost only for the purpose of denying their existence. Most authors came to the conclusion that there is no specific neurosis created exclusively by war conditions (Fairbairn, 1943; Kardiner, 1941) and that traumatic neuroses do not constitute a separate disease entity, but consist of various neurotic reactions similar in cause and effect to all other neuroses and distinguished only by the sharpness and severity of the precipitating factors (Grinker and Spiegel, 1945). Furthermore, the emphasis was put on latent predisposing mechanisms which were triggered off by the trauma, on old conflicts over which the damaged and intimidated ego had lost control (Grinker and Spiegel) or on a specific emotional vulnerability (Saul and Lyons, 1952). Brenner (1953) points out that the literature supports Freud's doubt that objective danger alone can give rise to neurosis without the participation of

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the deeper unconscious layers of the psychic apparatus, or that a terrifying experience can of itself produce neurosis in adult life. An event is traumatic, Brenner feels, because of its relation to the individual's unconscious conflicts rather than of the intensity of the physiological sensory response it occasions. Cohen (1951) sees in the traumatic neurosis only a " normal " neurosis and is convinced that the nearer a neurosis is to the character of a traumatic neurosis the better the prognosis and the greater the chance that even brief psychotherapy will prove effective. Brosin (1960) even reduces the clinical entity " trauma " to a commonplace event when he asks " who is not the victim of a *petit* traumatic neurosis day by day?"

Already prior to, but mostly during World War II people were exposed to psychic traumata for which language has no words. In the search to attach a diagnostic label to the psychic sequelae of these traumata the term " traumatic neurosis " intrudes willy nilly upon the investigator. We know from Freud that " There is a repetition compulsion in psychic life that goes beyond the pleasure principle " (1920). My assumption now is that these psychic traumata go beyond the concept of traumatic neurosis, and, even more, that they go beyond any human concept. I am referring, of course, to the traumata suffered by Jewish survivors of the German concentration camps and I want to point out that statements made by psychoanalysts that " external events, no matter how overwhelming, precipitate a neurosis only when they touch on specific unconscious conflicts" (Rosenberg, 1943), need revision as far as the survivors of the camps are concerned. Such statements can also easily be exploited as an admission of an inferior Jewish unconscious and an " Anlage conditioning " for neurosis, thus a confirmation of the theories of the Third Reich.

Eissler (1963) pointed out the contradiction that these individuals were originally condemned to the tortures and atrocities of the camp because of their " Anlage " and years later when as victims of the theory of Anlage they claimed restitution they were told for a second time that it was their Anlage which condemned them to their sufferings. He declared the objection based on Anlage-conditioning as immoral. Actually the traumatic insults were so severe that only Anlage-conditioned mental defectiveness could account for the absence of late psychic reactions (Uexkull, 1962). When Freud expressed his doubt that a terrifying experience can of itself produce neurosis in adult life, he could not have foreseen or imagined the terror practices of the SS which were designed to exhaust anybody's personality resources regardless of the presence or absence of specific conflicts in the unconscious. An insistence of investigators on finding some latent predisposition for the personality breakdown betrays their unwillingness to imagine the full impact of the terror.

As a rule, even those who had opportunity to collect full information shut their ears when confronted with one of the survivors. There has been some change since the Eichmann trial, but the wise words of Jones (1945) have still full validity that

> it may be doubted whether any but the actual victims have the power of imagining such things with any degree of vividness except those who derive a directly sadistic pleasure from the thoughts or accounts of them, and such indulgence has of course little social value. As a rule the mind recoils from the horrors either violently or angrily or more often withdraws by all the varieties of denial and discounting to actual complacent ignoring.

I survived a concentration camp but I regularly made the observation that people did not really want me to talk about my experiences and whenever I started they invariably showed their resistance by interrupting me by asking: " Tell us how did you get out?" It is the " Schwamm d'rüber", the gloss-over-it attitude which also explains the paucity of psychoanalytic literature[2] on the concentration camp. What goes " beyond " the average traumatic neurosis is the guilt that the concentration camp experience evokes in the person who was spared the trauma and feels the need to defend himself against its impact by empathy and the resulting reaction in the person who suffered the original trauma. Niederland (1964) calls it the " Schweige-Agreement ", i.e. a mutual agreement between interviewer and victim not to go into any details about the camp experience.

Of great practical help in differentiating a war or combat neurosis from concentration camp reactions is an article by Rado (1942). He begins

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[2] At time of writing—summer 1967. (There is a Symposium on psychic traumatization through social catastrophe in the last issue of the *Journal.*)

with the pre-traumatic period in which the soldier in facing the novelties and dangers of military life is provided with various psychic resources, notably his sense of duty, which is backed by his desire for self-respect. Rado does not mention the inculcation of the boy with patriotic history-writing and patriotic slogans of which all relate masculinity with fighting for the fatherland. He refers to a compliance with the demands of conscience which brings a sense of stature and security, and he emphasizes a moral force being thus created which may be so powerful as to increase vastly the soldier's strength and endurance. Again without being specifically mentioned by Rado, this endurance will extend into the rigours of life in a prisoner-of-war camp.

For the future concentration camp inmate the pre-traumatic stage was ushered in by the " Umbruch " which was indeed the breaking up of all human values, especially of human rights and in particular of the human rights of the Jews. At the same time it meant the establishment of a new feudal aristocracy recruited from the ranks of the hooligans of the SS. The Jew had already been acquainted with anti-Semitism based on the religious accusation that he was guilty of the execution of a legendary Christ by the Romans and in a manner that the Romans used on the captured Spartakists whose crosses lined the road all the way from Rome to Capua. But the series of humiliations that he suffered now was systematic and when he heard the yelling in his ears " Juda verrecke " it did not simply mean " Juda perish " but " Juda perish in anguish and agony and in contempt". Usually he had already lost his job or business, his career was shattered, and he wondered whether he should commit suicide, as many did, feeling that it was a fruitless struggle to recapture social stature and security after they had been forced to scrub the privies of the new aristocracy. Nevertheless, the majority still could not accept that civilization had definitely come to an end. Therefore, even on the transport to the camp, which actually should be included already in the traumatic period because the SS guards were encouraged to utilize it for sadistic games and received awards for captives shot supposedly in the attempt to escape, most captives still held on to the illusion that the SS had merely got out of hand and that the destination of the transport was some sort of semi-military or boy scout camp in the fresh air. In the traumatic period the soldier, according to Rado, has to deal with the conflict between his unconscious anxiety mechanism of emergency control which insists in removing the danger either by flight or by mad attack, even at comrades and superiors, and his newly learned military technique of doing his duty while ignoring the danger to his life and regressing to the delusion of invulnerability and immortality.

It is pointless to compare the arrival of a soldier on the battlefield with the arrival of a prisoner of the Gestapo in the concentration camp, where the captive suddenly found himself in a world as weird as an asylum run by the insane and an Inferno that defied the imagination of a Dante. As far as being overwhelmed by his emergency controls, he had no flight open other than into the electric wire charged with 380 volts and in front of the machine gun towers placed at equal distance and together with the wire surrounding the camp. He could attack his comrades, maybe even one of the comrades who, appointed by the SS to be in charge of his quarters, were called 'block eldest' and 'room eldest' in contrast to the 'block Führer', the SS petty officer in charge. However, if he experienced the trauma in accordance with the definition by Kardiner (1941) as an abrupt and transitory stoppage of his efficient personality operations and an inability to meet the demand of the new situation, after he had been the object of the rudest physical brutality he learned quickly that only rapid submission could save his life, at least temporarily. He had to learn to effect a balance between a life-saving apathy in regard to his environment and an ever-ready alertness. The warning word whispered by one captive to the other was " achtzehn " (i.e. eighteen) a derivative of " Achtung " (attention). He could not afford a traumatic neurosis. As a matter of fact, getting any illness was a catastrophe in the camp and if there was any question of pretending the captive learned soon that he could survive only by always pretending to be strong and healthy. He had to avoid the dangerous consequences of " Auffallen " (drawing attention to himself) which consisted in stimulating the endeavour of the SS for " fertig machen " (i.e. making him ready for the crematorium).

The soldier, by persisting in allowing his emergency controls to take over in many instances really manages to remove himself from the danger to his life, even if only by getting incarcerated; if the captive provoked any of the infamous camp punishments he merely accelerated his demise and most surely and rapidly

by incarceration in isolation in the black bunker.

The post-traumatic period of the soldier is divided by Rado into an early and a late stage. In the former, after an initial brief period of apathy or stupor, a state of general excitement soon evolves and is punctuated by outbursts of anxiety which perpetuates itself by the soldier's unconscious illusion that he is still in the thick of his critical experience and is expressed in terrifying dreams and in the waking state either in paralysis of his perceptual and motor functions, accompanied by self-centred, self-pampering behaviour, or in a seemingly self-assertive manner by manifestations of his pent-up rage. In the late post-traumatic period the trauma, originally representative of the threats of war, comes to stand for all prospective dangers so that the personality is under a traumatophobic regime. The liberated concentration camp survivor, if he was not physically too weak from starvation, was in a state of excitement in which he was possessed by the frantic search for a possible survivor of his family, therefore he had still no time for a traumatic neurosis. Sperling (1950) was surprised by the delinquent behaviour and the ingratitude of the survivors of the death factories. He interprets that as long as they were behind barbed wire they had to keep their rebellion suppressed but it was "at least directed against the enemy". After liberation there was nobody to hate and they could not help but turn the released aggression against their benefactors:

> When they were convinced that they were not being punished they behaved like wayward youths; what the cruelty of their tormentors had not succeeded in doing was achieved by the kindness of their benefactors, and they developed psychoneuroses.

It is evident that it was a maximum of aggression that these survived candidates for the gas chamber had accumulated during their captivity but they did not expect anything better than hostility from their enemies. They had, however, cherished high expectations from their liberators. They were sure that at last they would be allowed and even encouraged to unleash their dammed-up aggressions on their tormentors but were startled and frustrated when their tormentors were protected from the deserved vengeance and many even helped to escape. Liberation was a disappointment and a new trauma in many aspects, especially insofar as the gruesome sight of the captives aroused the anxiety and collective guilt of their liberators which, transformed into hostility, was projected upon the captives.

Trautman (1961) and Venzlaff (1958) compared the fate of the returning disabled war veteran or the liberated prisoner of war with the fate of the liberated concentration camp survivor. For the home-coming soldier the reinstalment into a normal social life was facilitated by all sorts of auxiliary measures, such as public charity, the fatherland's honouring of the heroes, and the fulfilment of his deep desire to return to his family where he found nursing care, safety, protection, and understanding. There was no home-coming for the survivor of the concentration camp. No home, no gratitude of the fatherland, no job or property were waiting for him. In contrast to the soldier who was taken under the protective wings of his family, the concentration camp veteran returned to a stamped-out vacuum. Where the soldier veteran found refuge and shelter, the concentration camp veteran was faced with inconsolable isolation. Uprooted from his native soil he searched for a homeless future in a strange country with a foreign language.

Bettelheim, who was in Block (barrack) 12 in Buchenwald while I was in the neighbouring Block 13, wrote an early comprehensive book (1960) on the concentration camp from the viewpoint of the psychoanalyst and it was probably because he had not then acquired enough distance from the experience and had to obtain inner relief from his residual anxiety that he made a number of controversial statements. He blames the frantic holding on to property as the reason that so many Jews missed the opportunity to leave as long as there was still time. Of course, leaving the place of one's upbringing and countless attachments was indeed a source of deep separation anxiety, but it was also extremely difficult for practical reasons. It was a disaster unprecedented in history that a whole nation should go berserk, but worse than that, nobody in his right mind could have anticipated that all the civilized governments, including the Vatican, would surrender to Hitler's cabinet of hooligans. It went even beyond Hitler's own most cheerful expectations. Therefore, it was not the holding on to property but to their faith in humanity that induced so many Jews to stay behind and to wait for the spook to pass. Bettelheim does not disregard, but fails to draw conclusions from the fact that the countries adjoining Germany had

not opened their borders to welcome the fleeing Jews. The borders had to be crossed illegally and the restrictions of the American quota system alone have cost the lives of thousands of Jews waiting for visas.

There is, further, Bettelheim's surprise about the cooperation that the SS received from their victims. They had often opportunities to " overpower their armed guards. Even if some prisoners had been killed in the process, the majority would have been free to join partisan groups. At the very least they could have enjoyed a temporary revenge without loss to themselves". He quotes Hoess, commander of Auschwitz, wondering why the prisoners did not revolt; but would not Hoess be the first one to announce that the prisoners themselves were to be blamed for succumbing in such numbers, not the SS? " The prisoners knew they were destined to die and still made almost no effort to revolt." Bettelheim called this committing suicide without any effort on their own, intimating that it was quite different from the heroic act of committing harikiri. He explained that the " docility " of the prisoners was caused by their pent-up hostility which " devoured their emotional energy ". He emphasized that exaggerated hostility was on either side but while the SS men could express their hostility freely, the Jews had to turn it against themselves. No wonder that " the twin process of repressing all hostility and inflating the terrible image of the SS devoured almost all their energy ". Bettelheim disregards that the anti-Jewish need for defence by projection is so great that such statements can be misinterpreted as proofs that it was not the murderer's fault but the victim's and that the Jews are cowards, which is exactly what Bettelheim apparently tried to disprove. After all, who were the first partisans to resist the most powerful war machine in the world for three weeks? The Jews, and without parachuted supplies from the Allies that the Polish and the French partisans had. Groups had been formed of Jewish youth in Poland already before the ghetto was set up and in the early days of the ghetto, but they were made to feel responsible for mass murder of their own people because of the rage they would incite in the German monster. The Poles went after business as usual while on the other side of the Vistula the Germans crazed by fear and fury attacked the ghetto with flame throwers and fog gas.

I want to remind Bettelheim that both of us could witness in the camp an example of the anxiety that could be aroused even in the Nazi hierarchy by a good military performance of the Jews. One day Himmler came for a visit to Buchenwald and the captives were commanded to honour him with a parade march. At the roll call on the next morning Roedl, deputy commander of Buchenwald, made another one of his speeches in a Bavarian dialect for which he was nicknamed by the captives, the Sophocles of Buchenwald: " The Jews have put in an excellent parade march yesterday. If that should happen again the block eldest of all the Aryan blocks will get twenty-five (whip lashes) on the ass." What could be more devastating to the morale of the SS than an exact military performance by the Jews? Therefore, as monstrous as it may sound, the SS could have been worse and most likely would have been worse if the Jews had resorted to hopeless resistance. The Jews knew this. Roedl had once confided to one of the Vehme murderers who had aroused the anger of Hitler and therefore was sent to Buchenwald, but of course belonged to the hierarchy of inmates, that in case of any organized resistance by the Jews he would set the torch to all the Jewish blocks and have machine-gunned the occupants as they tried to escape the flames. Besides the overwhelming military power of the military security formations it was the knowledge of the unprecedented retaliatory strategy of the SS that made any thought of rebellion in camp unpopular. I remember an occasion when a reprisal was made on all the occupants of Buchenwald for the successful escape of two prisoners. All blocks had to stand at attention in freezing temperatures a whole winter night until the morning when the two fugitives were picked up by the Gestapo, returned to the camp, and hanged under the eyes of all the captives. The camp Führer's relief was so great that he had a piece of blood sausage distributed among the captives, but that could not be enjoyed by the numerous victims of that night who were dying of pneumonia.

The historical examples of the retaliatory fury of the Nazis are well known. The revenge for the assassination of von Rath by Grünspan was the Reichs-Crystal Night, the first mass action against the Jews in the style of a pogrom; after the assassination of Heydrich by Czech heroes they were retaliated upon by mass executions and the razing of Lidice; the ghetto of Warsaw was attacked with tanks and flame throwers and

every building was razed to the ground, and a similar fate was met by Oradouh sur Glans in retaliation for a successful action by French partisans.

Returning to the topic of late psychic reactions of concentration camp survivors to their severe traumatization the following case histories will be illustrative.

Rosa lived in a small town in Carpatho-Ruthenia, the easternmost part of the CSR, which Hitler ceded to Hungary in 1939, but not without his insistence on the introduction of the racial laws of Nürnberg. Rosa was then 15 years old, the only girl in the family and the oldest of six children. Her father owned a transportation company with buses and taxis, but immediately lost his licence. Soldiers and horses moved into their requisitioned home and the family had to move into the garage on which a yellow star had to be affixed. Rosa and her brothers were no longer permitted to attend school. She learned to sew dresses, but forced to wear the yellow star she was ridiculed and harassed on her way to work every day. Her father who had tried to get some meat for his hungry family was betrayed to the Gestapo and put in jail for four weeks. On Passover in 1944 when her father was praying with his prayer shawl on, the SS stormed the house and the father was beaten mercilessly in front of the family. Two days later it was announced that all Jews had to assemble at the synagogue within one hour, carrying food and mattresses with them. The agony among the Jews was indescribable. They were secluded in a ghetto consisting of one square block and all the windows had to be nailed down with wooden boards so that nobody could look out to the street. Every morning at 5 a.m. Hungarian soldiers came for the Jewish girls to scrub the streets of the city outside the ghetto. After four weeks the ghetto was dissolved but the SS announced that there was no reason to fear, that they would be resettled and that the families would remain together, only the children would be housed separately, and all adults would have to work. They were handed a piece of bread and herded into cattle wagons without water and privies and packed so tightly that they could not even sit down. The heat and stench were unbearable, people died and others were lying on top of them. This was the transport to the extermination camp which lasted nearly a week. The arrival in Auschwitz was staged by the camp leadership with greatest refinement. There was a detachment of SS with loaded guns, the bloodhounds barked, and gay German soldier songs were transmitted from loudspeakers. Rosa's grandmother who had broken a leg was dragged away first. Rosa's youngest brother who ran after her was hit by an SS guard with a whip in the face. The grandmother was shot at once and the brother whose face was covered with blood was dragged away. Suddenly her father disappeared and in a panic she held on to her mother but the capos separated them. They pushed her one way and the mother another and she was alone. After her hair was shorn she looked so infantile that at the roll calls the women took her in the middle of the formation so that she would not arouse attention and be selected for extermination like all the children except the twins who were taken to the infirmary every morning for so-called scientific experiments and returned to the barracks again in the evening. She had to share her bunk with seven other girls so that when one wanted to turn over all eight had to turn at the same time. She soon felt emotionally blunted and did not even think of her dead parents and of her grandmother whom she had seen shot. One day one of the SS Walkyries in the green uniforms noticed her taking a sip of water during working time and hit her with the belt buckle in the face. She has a scar over the left eye and her left ear lobe was torn off. Finally she was " selected " but for nightwork in a munitions factory in Gelsenkirchen, camouflaged with heavy stones which the women had to carry away every evening and return again in the morning. One day the factory was bombed by the British and five hundred women were killed on that day. The women were ordered to march to another factory and after this was bombed too they began their four weeks' death march to the East on which those who dropped from exhaustion at the wayside were shot immediately by the guards. The SS women were the worst, for whenever Allied airplanes were overhead they cursed the Jewish women and wished them to be killed, but the planes dived and the gunners could see what a wretched column it was. On 14 April 1945, after the SS guards had suddenly disappeared, the women were liberated by the American Army. From over two thousand who had left Auschwitz-Birkenau fewer than one hundred were left. Now Rosa felt sick for her parents, did not give up hope that some member of her family might be alive, and took the first opportunity to travel through Czechoslovakia. She could not find anybody, but while staying at a Displaced Persons' Camp she met a man who was employed there as a guard and married him.

Rosa, who was now 39 years old, came to each interview accompanied by her husband, who worked for his father who owned a taxi company. Shedding tears, she admitted that she had not been out of the house unaccompanied since she got married in 1945. When she left the house she got so dizzy that she did not know what was happening to her, especially when she had to cross the street. While her husband is at work her three children, the 17-year-old boy and the twins, a boy and a girl 14-years-old, took care

of the household and went shopping for her. Characteristic for this patient was her ego impoverishment or inner emptiness, a direct reaction to the extinction of her family and the sudden and brutal stamping out of every bond and sentimental attachment to the significant people and places of her childhood by the holocaust. It was for this reason that the street had no cathexis for her except a hostile devouring one. Her agoraphobia was an externalization of her ego-impoverishment and her fear of ego-evacuation or dissociation by the street. Correlated with her ego-impoverishment was her addiction to pregnancies. In the first four years of her marriage she had six pregnancies, three of them ending in miscarriages. Her addiction to pregnancies, later followed by an addiction to surgery, represented a repetition compulsion in regard to filling the inner vacuum and also to undoing the genocide committed by the Gestapo. The agoraphobia was also reminiscent of an incident in Auschwitz when one morning in a rigid hysterical catatonic-like state of immobility she had refused to go to the roll-call though she knew the refusal would have meant her certain death. Her women friends had to pull her out of her bunk and drag her to the roll-call. After the alternating stages of being filled during her pregnancies and emptied by the deliveries and following a tubal ligation no longer emptied of children but of a gallbladder, appendix, and an enlarged thyroid, she arrived once again at the Muselmann stage of complete apathy. The captive in that stage has given up any further attempts at adjustment and is ready for the gas and the crematorium. This experience explained her repetitive nightmare in which she walked and came to the edge of a cliff from which she fell down while the SS troopers were waiting beneath to grab her.

Sarah, a pretty 43-year-old woman, had a number tatooed on her left arm above the wrist. Like Rosa she was tied to her home by an agoraphobia and went out only if accompanied by her husband. One of her two sons went shopping for her. She had no difficulty enumerating her somatic complaints but only with great resistance would she talk about her sufferings during the Nazi persecution. When she did, however, it was astounding how vivid the details of her frightful experiences had remained in her memory for so many years.

She was born in 1921 in a village near Bialystok in east Poland where her parents operated a small food store. She was the second of five daughters and after she had finished elementary school she became an apprentice in a dress shop. When she was 20 years old the German army invaded the village. Her sewing machine was confiscated, her parents lost their shop, and the family had to move to the overcrowded quarters of the ghetto which was surrounded by barbed wire. Yellow badges had to be sewn on the clothes and the girls were sent, accompanied by armed guards, to clean the SS barracks and to dig potatoes in the fields. One day in 1943, when she was 23 years old, it was announced that the ghetto was to be evacuated and the inhabitants had to pack their possessions for resettlement. A panic broke out, many people ran into the wire, were shot, and were hanging in the wire. She, her parents, and her three sisters—one had emigrated to America in 1938—were transported for three days in a sealed-off cattle car, without food or water. When the transport arrived in the extermination camp half of the car was already filled with corpses. The SS guards were waiting at the ramp with bloodhounds and rifles with fixed bayonets. A young mother gave a deadly injection to her own child. When the SS corporal who made the " selections " approached Sarah's mother the sisters in tears begged him to spare her, but he pushed the mother's shoulder with his rifle butt; she fell down and the capos grabbed her. She could still see her mother's big sad eyes when she was dragged away. Then Sarah had to say farewell to her father who had resigned himself to his fate and was only concerned in consoling his crying daughters.

Her older sister was separated from her and transferred to another camp. In the barracks to which Sarah was finally assigned, space was made for the new arrivals by sending some other girls from her home town who had lost their minds, for extermination. Sarah's youngest sister, Ruth, fell sick with fever and chills but did not dare to go to the hospital for fear of being sent into the gas, but after a few days was transferred anyway to the barrack in which the next candidates for the gas chamber were assembled. Sarah learned of it after she returned from her outside work one evening. She sneaked off to her sister in spite of the prohibition and looked through the window. Ruth complained how terrible it was inside and that she was freezing. Sarah ran back to her barrack, climbed up to her sleeping bunk, and tore off a piece of her blanket which, hidden under her blouse, she brought as a last token of love to her poor sister.

Other experiences indelible in her mind were the hangings of five women during the roll-call, one of them trying to commit suicide with a razor blade before she was hanged, and their remaining on the gallows for a whole day. Sarah was selected twice for donating blood for the German army without increase in her food ration.

One day in 1945 no labour force left the camp

any more. At night the camp was evacuated and the captives were commanded to march on the snow-covered country road. Many could not keep pace and were shot on the wayside. When the rest reached a railroad station in the morning they were packed into flat, open freight cars and transported another day and a night to the concentration camp Ravensbrück. This camp was so overcrowded that the new arrivals had to spend the night outside and next morning were crammed into a barn. In March 1945 there was such a shortage of food and the camp was in such a state of chaos that the prisoners were no longer ordered to forced labour. However, the rumour was spread that the barn would be set on fire and the captives who tried to escape the flames would be shot. She managed to slip out of the barn and to fade into the crowd in the open camp. Soon afterwards Ravensbrück was evacuated and the women were again commanded to march. When after a whole night's march they stopped for a rest they noticed that the SS guards had taken to their heels and that they were free. She was not even happy and she did not know what to do. She was searching for her older sister but could not find her and suddenly became aware that she was alone in the world. The women broke into an abandoned house to search for food and somehow they managed to find their way to Munich. They received food packages from UNRA and Ruth was sent by the Jewish Relief Agency to a D.P. camp where she met the man to whom she immediately got married, another survivor of a concentration camp.

It was in the D.P. camp that she got pregnant and gave birth to a boy, but by Caesarian section. She was unable to breast-feed the baby and was not even able to hold and bottle feed him. She was in the grip of fears that she would drop the baby or would do harm to it otherwise. She was never seen on the street with her child and soon she avoided the street altogether.

Her sister in the United States had signed a so-called affidavit of support for her but the quota was filled and she had to wait a few years in the D.P. camp until she received immigration visas for herself, her husband, and her child. After arrival in the U.S. she had two miscarriages and then was delivered of another child, again a boy and again by Caesarian section. All the previous symptoms reappeared. She was afraid of touching, holding, and feeding the infant, his care was left to her husband who is two years her senior.

However, now in her anxiety dreams she pressed an infant tightly to herself and while she was desperately trying to run away from a persecutor who wanted to snatch the child away from her she woke up screaming: " No, no!" In another dream she was in a room and looked out of the window—like her sister before she was gassed—suddenly she saw fire everywhere. She ran in panic but stopped and remembered that her mother was still in one of the rooms in the back and called desperately for her. In a corresponding dream she called for her sisters. Characteristic was a dream in which she and hundreds of other women were pulled up high in an open elevator and then all blood and fat was sucked out of the women and pumped through pipes into a big kettle.

Margot, a 45-year-old Jewish woman, could maintain a brittle psychic balance only as long as she enumerated the multitude of her somatic complaints. As soon as she finished relating them she fell into a depressive silence which was interrupted only by her loud sobbing. She had great difficulties in relating her traumatic experiences to which she obviously had still not acquired enough distance.

She was born in Berlin and was next to the youngest in a family of six children. Her father maintained a wholesale dry goods business and the family lived in modest prosperity. She was a healthy and pretty girl and her ambition was to become a fashion designer. However, at the age of 15 when she was old enough to go to art school it was 1933, the year of the " Umbruch ", and no college would accept her. Through business connections her father was able to get her the job of a cutter in a laundry factory and she could also use her talent of designing to some degree. But it was a Jewish firm, and in the year 1938, when she was 19 years old, the firm was aryanized and she lost her job. The traumatic events followed in rapid succession and after the notorious gruesome experiences of the " Aussiedlung " into the ghetto of Tarnow came an experience that she reported only after some persuasion. One day in Tarnow an SS officer ordered her, under the pretext that her Jew badge was not in order, into his office and raped her. Soon thereafter the resettlement transports from Tarnow started, three of them, until Tarnow was " purified of Jews ". The victims had to bring all their goods and chattels to the place of assembly and to sort it there carefully before the SS troopers confiscated them. Ten thousand Jewish people were selected for the first transport, among them the parents of the patient, and a great number of them were shot on the spot. Margot from then on kept herself hidden in the aryan district in a basement and also got married there. The marriage saved her from suicide out of guilt that she had not accompanied her parents on their road to death. The only memory of her wedding day is that a number of Jews who had taken leave from forced labour on account of illness had been shot in front

of the labour office. She could not live with her husband until six years later, after she had survived the atrocities of three concentration camps.

Margot had a repetitive dream: the gestapo is knocking at the door: " Open up, open up, we want the child." She is pressing a little girl to herself and yells back: " I am not giving her to you, this time not." The Gestapo agents are shooting and the patient woke up screaming and bathed in sweat.

Aside from the fact that Margot had three daughters, aged 16, 14, and 12 years old, the dream was correlated with a particularly hideous experience in the camp. In the sealed-off cattle wagon in which she and hundreds of other Jewish women were transported to the death-camp she had kept one of the two little girls of a mother hidden under her coat. The mothers had given sleeping drugs to the children so that they would not betray their presence by crying. However, at the arrival in camp the women were forced to undress immediately and to parade to the roll-call place in the nude while the smuggled-in children were taken away from them. Thirty-five children were discovered and Margot remembered that one child had just bitten into an apple which the SS guard pulled out of the child's hand at once. Infants were killed by dashing their heads against a brick wall or by being thrown into the air and shot at for target practice. The rest of the children were driven up an elevation and shot there; and while this dreadful spectacle was being enacted a loudspeaker tried to drown out the shrieks of the children and the laments of the mothers with a gay song the words of which were: " I am riding to heaven, mommy good-bye, good-bye, I am riding to heaven, mommy good-bye."

None of the three patients, apart from their state of severe traumatization, showed the other criteria of traumatic neurosis. They were not predisposed and their shocking experiences did not trigger off a pre-existing infantile conflict. Therefore, their symptoms cannot be reduced to derivatives of the infantile period and they cannot be approached therapeutically in the usual manner.

All three women when I interviewed them were in a state of chronic depression in which their vital energy had been pumped out of them, as it is depicted in Sarah's third dream. The phobic or somatic overlay was a defence against deeper depression. Each of them had married the first man they could lay eyes on after liberation in an attempt to fill the vacuum into which the holocaust had turned their world. Since the husbands represented only lost parental images the marital relationships were unconsciously incestuous and consequently the women were frigid. The pregnancies served the same purpose as the marriages, of filling a vacuum, and in each case the deliveries were not looked forward to but were dreaded as repetitions of the feared forceful separation from the children.

I am coming now to my own camp experience to which I have already alluded before. It was at the time prior to the War, and before the " Endlösung " (the final solution), i.e. before the mass extermination of the Jews was conceived. It was the time when the camps were used " merely " for the continuous supply of slaves to serve as objects for the training of the SS in sadism and cold-blooded murder and when the Jewish inmates, after an indefinite period of captivity provided they survived it, could expect release and freedom if their relatives delivered guarantees for their immediate emigration from Germany. This was however extremely difficult, not only because the countries bordering Germany had closed their frontiers to Jewish refugees but because these refugees were not permitted to take out any money or valuables from Greater Germany, a law which greatly impeded the illegal crossing of borders.

Naturally I was not only much older but also on a better fortified level of political and psychological sophistication than the three women victims of the Gestapo. Nevertheless, the impact of the camp experience and the anxiety it generated must have been powerful enough to elicit repetitive dreams which have persisted for the last twenty-five years. An analysis of some of these dreams should afford an opportunity to determine special phenomena in my own late concentration camp reactions distinctly different from those of the cases I have described.

I was released from concentration camp by presentation of a counterfeit Shanghai visa purchased on the black market and, while waiting for a valid permit for a temporary stay in England, at each dreaded personal reporting to Gestapo headquarters I was threatened with being returned to the camp for any further delay. When I was about to leave Germany at the border station in Aachen I was taken off the train by SS officers and ordered to stand with my face towards the wall, one of the individual camp punishments. It was as if they had read my mind, because before they allowed me to turn around and board the train to freedom again

they warned me that their agents in foreign countries would certainly catch me and bring me back or do away with me if I should dare to spread atrocity propaganda. Needless to say, this last encounter with the Gestapo only strengthened my determination to publicize my experiences. However, the frustration began already in England, where instead of being interviewed for valuable information, I was told to register as an enemy alien. My attempts to publish my experiences in the camp in an English newspaper met with rejection as untimely, not suitable, etc. My guarantors in England were not ashamed to suggest that out of gratitude for my salvation from the Nazis I should be converted to Christianity for lasting salvation. The American embassies and consulates in Europe were infiltrated with Nazis, which was the reason that thousands of Jews perished in Europe while waiting for American visas. The *National American*, the paper of the American National Socialist Party, in its issue of May 1938, had even demanded sterilization for all refugees entering the United States. When I arrived in the United States it was in the era of isolationism and the refugees were only an annoyance because they represented unwelcome reminders of the guilt of acquiescence which had been shrugged off with indifference.

My dreams in camp were dreams of simple wish-fulfilment of a good meal and of being released from captivity and returning home to my parents. In contrast, the dreams of my late post-traumatic period are anxiety dreams of a repetitive character with the main topic being my compelling desire to return to the camp, but before the roll-call, so that my absence would not be noticed or reported.[3] The anxiety pertains to accomplishing this senseless and practically impossible task. I have to sneak back into the camp, and finding the way to the entrance is depicted as very difficult. In one dream, wooden horses and conical metal posts are placed in the midst of the highway to isolate a narrow passageway leading to the entrance.[4] In another dream I followed secretly through the woods the trail of SS officers returning from their evening entertainment. There is also anxiety expressed in some dreams about returning in time before the gates are closed or finding the secret entrance to the camp.

In the camp there is the pleasant feeling of reunion with the comrades whom I had left behind, shaking hands with the more significant among them who are smiling upon seeing me again. Such a dream is usually associated with a psychoanalytic convention like the following in which immediately after the " Einkleidung ", the rigging-out, which stands for the registration, I talked to the capo in charge of the labour assignment and he procured a very good labour commando, which stands for a good dinner table assignment at the convention. To my unpleasant surprise I had forgotten my paper but the block eldest—the chairman of the scientific section—told me to speak from memory. In a dream that I recorded twenty years ago, I had to return to the camp but I also smuggled my girl friend, now my wife, into the camp. I wanted to introduce her to the hierarchy[5] of the inmates and had some misgivings whether she would be accepted. In a more recent dream my wife is waiting for me in the camp impatiently as if she were waiting at home with the dinner. The emphasis again is on delay and on keeping somebody waiting.

The following dreams give an appraisal of my feelings in regard to the SS: SS guards are marching in formation carrying triangular hats and one in front has a triangular flag like a boy scout. Triangular emblems, red for po itical, green for criminal, and black for work-dlodgers were worn by the captives on the right trouser leg and the right side of the blouse. They indicated the categories and were intentionally distributed at random to prevent the formation of sympathizing groups as possible focuses of organized resistance (Kogan 1946). The Jews wore the star of David with the additional colours red, black, green, or yellow, also selected at random. The idea had originated in the minds of the SS but the emblems also looked like the hoods of the Ku Klux Klan, a hint that it can also happen here. As if to dispel any idea of the parental image of the SS officer in one dream I found a baby in the camp, an oversized baby

[3] I was once a patient in the hospital but remembered that prior to my illness I had been invited to an important party. With quick determination I jumped out of bed, got dressed, sneaked past the nurses' desk, stepped into my car and drove to the meeting. After it was over I returned to the hospital, again sneaked past the nurses, and was in bed without my absence having been noticed.

[4] The Chicago traffic police use these obstacles to regulate the traffic in the morning and evening rush hours. The anxiety pertains to the neglect of duty by being late in the office and keeping the first patient waiting in front of the locked door to my office.

[5] The hierarchy of the inmates are those who are influential, who are " in ", i.e. the hierarchy of the professional Association.

with the ruddy face of the commander and attended by a nurse. In another dream I had donned my prisoner's garb and in civilian clothes was walking with a uniformed SS guard through the wooded area outside the camp Buchenwald down the hill to the city of Weimar. I had heard from the guard that he was afraid of girls and guessed that he hoped if he struck up a friendship with me I would help him to find a girl. The dream was a thin disguise for the attempt to treat an SS man with psychotherapy. It also referred to a verse characterizing the sexual reputation of the SS:

Von den Mädchen gemieden, von den Huren geliebt,
Innen verrotten und aussen auf Draht
Das ist der Buchenwalder Bewachungssoldat.

Shunned by the girls but loved by the tart,
Rotten inside but outside smart,
This is the trooper of Buchenwald's guard.

A whole series of dreams deals with frustrated efforts to publicize the camp experience. Forgetting the typescript of my scientific paper is one example. In a dream some years ago I had to finish a paper before the Nazis came but it was too late. I wanted to run with the unfinished paper through a subway tunnel that would lead outside the city. I thought of squeezing myself between the electric conduits and the rounded wall of the tunnel which looked like the Underground in London, but the SS forestalled it, stopped me at the entrance of the tunnel, and warned me that I would kill myself in this foolhardy endeavour.

As a rule, the frustration of the need to publicize is connected with the anxiety about how long the internment in the camp will last. In one dream I had, of all things, been given permission by the SS to have cognac, a favourite drink of German officers, sent to me in the camp instead of the whiskey they had in their canteen, but in spite of it could not stop worrying how long I would have to stay in the camp and postpone writing my planned book. It obviously represents a bribe of the superego for abstaining from what I considered my duty.[6]

Both the paradoxical compulsion to return to the camp and the compulsion to publish my experiences have the earmarks of superego demands but in contrast to both is the persistent anxiety about the unknown duration of the internment. In regard to the compulsion to return, my wife's suggestion in a dream that I could have the German consulate intervene instead derived from her occasionally expressed concern that the preoccupation with the camp might be too painful for me and is proposing a less strict superego. An early source of the superego was the admonitions of my foreman and closest friend in camp, a political youth from Düsseldorf, that as an Anti-Fascist I should accept that the camp was the place I belonged and the only place in Greater Germany where one need not be ashamed to be; therefore I should stop talking about when I might be freed. The contrast between the compulsion to return and the anxiety about the timelessness of the internment is clearly expressed in a dream that I recorded twenty years ago. In this dream I attended a meeting of the captives and a man—of course it was I—was sitting at the speaker's table, speaking about his attempts to intervene for them in interviews with the authorities, and that the release of the captives had been rejected. I revealed my feelings of hopelessness but they replied that I had many opportunities to escape and had used them, but each time had returned to the camp so that the situation could not be so hopeless. Which situation? The opportunities for marketing the essay or the book? The dreams are repetitive dreams and are the ego's attempt at subsequent mastery not of the trauma but of the task to alert the world and to become a witness for the prosecution before the tribunal of history. The feeling of urgency is so great that the mind is flooded with camp memories which attach themselves at random to any theme of daily life regardless of its significance. I have the inclination to forget, but there is the consciousness of a mission of which I keep reminding myself. In terms of trauma as defeat, the women patients struggled against personal defeat until they accepted it. I keep on, at least unconsciously, to struggle against the defeat of civilization. Remarkable is the fact that I never dream about specific traumatic experiences in the camp such as the following:

One day, on one of the dreaded outside labour commandos, where I was picking up gravel with bare hands, filling it into a wooden box, and carrying this together with another inmate, like two mules, to a different location to empty it out, I used the opportunity while my comrade was on the latrine and the foreman out of sight to throw myself on a spot of green grass and light a cigarette, look up to

[6] By association it refers to having a pleasant time with my wife after dinner instead of rushing at once to my desk to write.

the blue sky and enjoy being alone, an unattainable pleasure in camp life. It did not take long before an SS guard stood over me pointing his revolver at me. Though he could have reported me as shot in an attempt to escape he did not shoot. He impelled me to run ahead of him back toward the camp past the gate and to the wall where I was ordered to go into a kneebend with my face to the wall and to remain in this position for the rest of the afternoon and until after the roll-call. The penalty which was meted out a few days later consisted in hanging for half an hour on a tree trunk a few feet above ground with my back to the tree and hands and feet drawn closely together and tied behind me.

Only recently, as part of an involved dream-sequence, an arrogant SS man asked me whether I could dance. It was a malicious reference to dancing between bullets and this referred to the commandant's " singing birds ", i.e. the captives moaning in pain and anguish while hanging from stumps of trees on the roll-call place.

There is no childhood prototype in the unconscious of experiences of this sort and it still cannot measure up to the unheard-of horrors of the extermination camps—Auschwitz, Treblinka, Bergen-Belsen, etc. The danger to life actually was much less of a trauma than the abandonment by a faithless and indifferent humanity and the utterly degrading and dehumanizing conditions in the camp. It was also not even a human death with which the Jewish captives were finally confronted, and which holds at least some dignity, but mass extermination like undesirable insects.

In conclusion, one can say that the regenerative powers of the ego are not limitless, that the human spirit can be broken beyond repair, and that the damage can go " beyond " a traumatic neurosis, a term which can sound almost like a euphemism. The camp experience is so far outside normal experience and so far from the usual categories of thinking and feeling that it not only has no prototype as a derivative from childhood in the unconscious; it can also never be deleted from memory.

Discussing this paper at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association in Los Angeles in May 1964, Sperling referred to the obvious superego admonitions in my dreams: " If I were his superego, " he said, " I would have been impatient too. I would have asked him ' why do you wait until the last moment to write this paper? It is now twenty-four years since these things happened. What will you do if you die before you write the paper?' " He interpreted my procrastination on the basis of his hypothesis of the parasitic superego of the enemy which he assumed was introjected by the Gestapo command to keep silent about the camp when they took me off the train at the border station. It has derived from his concept of the trauma as a command which he had also used to interpret the lack of resistance of the Jewish victims of Nazi persecution. It seems to me from my dreams, rather, that instead of the conflict between a parasitic and the genuine superego, a traumatized ego cannot quite keep step with an audacious superego which is more approaching an ego-ideal.

Actually it was the trauma after the trauma which weakened my determination to write and to publish. My expectation of walking around proudly and shaking hands as the celebrated Concentration Camp Veteran, invited to lecture on the most insidious political enforcement institution in the history of the world, was thoroughly frustrated from the beginning. Instead, there was the fear of appearing perhaps " abnormal " and of having not worked through my own inner conflicts. Even Sperling who opened his discussion with declaring how necessary it was that I wrote this paper, referred to my " conflict " about faith in humanity and accusations about humanity's lack of interest as a reflection or revival of a conflict with a parent figure in my childhood. Unfortunately—not in particular for me, but for humanity—it is considered an attribute of normality to retain a resigned or acquiescent silence in the face of crime.

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